

Obtaining details about the number of cabbage whites collected in the past has proved relatively unsuccessful. One might have expected records of thousands of whites collected pre-1955 before the granulosus virus struck the cabbage whites and before the 1940s before organic insecticides were widely used. Marcia Ascott of Wittersham very generously went through the parish magazines from 1885 to the present day. Only names of recipients are given without numbers collected. It would seem that cabbage whites are becoming rare in Wittersham now. A note in the 1968 accounts relate that '*only the lack of the familiar cards of cabbage butterflies and queen wasps showed the combined effects of wet weather and the widespread use of insecticides.*' It is of interest that the prize was not awarded in 1971.

Talking to a few locals has revealed some details of technique. Hand-made butterfly swats were made out of about three faggots which were bound together. Some people recall catching about 300-400 whites which seemed to be an average figure. One person remembered catching nearly 1000 one year. The whites used to be presented in boxes or in tins with the number recorded on the outside. Now they are pinned on cards like the queen wasps. Many children in the village used to collect the cabbage whites for the annual show. For most of them it was the only way they could come by a few pennies. Other classes were in handwriting, painting and sewing.

This method of biological control of whites and wasps was probably effective in checking some infestations and for using up the unbounding energies of children in the parish. It is intriguing that this tradition is still maintained by the Horticultural Show. A similar sort of bounty was paid out by churchwardens for sparrows elsewhere in Kent at Petham, near Canterbury (*Country Life* 1973 June 21st). The annual average catch was about 600 birds, with a maximum of 929 in 1839. The bounty was a farthing for young and a halfpenny for older sparrows. — JOHN FELTWELL, Henley Down, Catsfield, East Sussex.

BUCCULATRIX THORACELLA (THUNBERG) (LEP.: LYONETIIDAE). — The past decade has seen a remarkable change in the distribution and abundance of this species. It is a colourful and well-marked moth and the larval feeding is conspicuous, making it unlikely that it was formerly overlooked.

In the past it was considered rather a scarce woodland species with a mainly western distribution. Meyrick gives "Gloucester to Derby and Lancashire"; outside this area there were isolated records from Kent and Sussex reported in their respective Victoria County Histories. The only foodplant was small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*).

In the 1970s I began to find it in local plenty in more easterly counties such as Northamptonshire and Essex, where it occurred in relics of ancient woodland in which small-leaved lime had persisted.

These colonies were tucked away in areas not much frequented by microlepidopterists and were probably of long standing; similar colonies were most likely present in other counties.

In recent years local councils often plant small-leaved limes as amenity trees on roadside verges and in Essex at any rate *B. thoracella* spread to them from its woodland haunts. Common lime (*T. x vulgaris*) often grows alongside and *B. thoracella* began to use it as an alternative foodplant and then fully adapted to it. This made possible its rapid and spectacular extension of range and its recent establishment as one of our most abundant urban insects.

It was first noted in London at South Kensington by R. J. Heckford on the 23rd of October, 1981. Since then I have found it, always in abundance, in Chelsea and Lampton, and on Hampstead Heath and Wanstead Flats, the only places in Greater London where I have looked for it. Outside London it has been found on common lime in Winchester and Oxford (P. H. Sterling, pers. comm.). Goater included it only as a doubtful species in his Hampshire list and Waters does not mention it at all in his list for the Oxford district.

Formerly it was strictly univoltine in Britain: woodland larvae collected in July never produced adults until the next year. However, the race on common lime is bivoltine (at any rate it was so in 1983). The reason may be climatic since it is bivoltine on the Continent and the British second generation may occur only in the "new" south-eastern colonies. But it is also possible that in the greatly increased population a proportion of early emergences occur, creating a capacity for a second brood.

I should be very pleased to hear of new facts, records or theories. There is some urgency if they are to be included in *The moths and butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* Volume 2, which we are hoping to publish in the summer of 1984. A. M. EMMET, Labrey Cottage, Victoria Gardens, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB11 3AF.

FRESH MOUNTAIN AIR. . . . ? – On the 18th of May 1983, whilst collecting on the western slopes of Mount Kenya, I observed two incidents of unusual(?) sexual behaviour in butterflies which prompt putting pen to paper.

It was a miserable day, the upper slopes of the mountain were hidden by cloud from about 9 o'clock and by 11 o'clock the rot had set in, the drizzle was almost constant and few butterflies were flying half heartedly during breaks in the weather.

The first incident occurred at about 3,000 metres, close to Percival's Bridge on the Naro Moru trail, built by the Royal Engineers in 1961. I was watching a female (?) specimen of the small *Actizera stellata* Trimen (Lep.; Lycaenidae) feeding on the pale pink blooms of *Erlangea fusca* (Compositae) when a fresh male *Harpencyreus aequatorialis* Sharpe (Lep.; Lycaenidae) alighted on the flower head and, without any preamble, proceeded to pursue the *stellata* around the flower head in a most urgent and positive manner.